

REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated July 13, 2005. Claims 1, 3, 5, 7 to 12 and 14 to 19 and 21 to 28 are pending in the application, of which Claims 1, 3, 5, 12, 19, 21, 23 and 25 to 28 are independent. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Claim 19 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 101 because the claimed invention is allegedly directed to non-statutory subject matter. Claim 19 was amended to be directed to a computer program stored on a computer-readable medium and executed by a computer. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection.

Claims 1, 5, 7 to 12 and 14 to 20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 6,809,831 (Minari) and U.S. Patent No. 5,845,065 (Conte). Claim 3 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Minari, Conte and U.S. Patent No. 6,370,577 (Hattori). Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested.

The present invention concerns license management techniques for imaging devices and provides a technique for controlling whether to set a new image forming apparatus as an output destination for a server. The actual license may be carried in devices, separate from the image forming devices, and coupled to an image processing server via a network.

Turning to specific claim language, amended independent Claim 1 is directed to an image forming system including a server and client computers and at least one image forming device which communicates with the server, and devices of which one or a plurality can be connected to the server. The system includes: input means for inputting to the server a job to be printed by an image forming device; rendering means for rendering the job input by the input means into an image; output means for outputting an image rendered by the rendering means to

an image forming device specified by the job; setting means for setting the specified image forming device as an output destination at the server; output destination information holding means for holding a number of image forming devices set as output destinations by the setting means; displaying means for setting dialog on a display unit which shows information of the image forming devices; recognizing means for recognizing a presence of devices connected to the server, and a number thereof connected in response to obtaining instruction to add new image forming devices as output destinations, wherein the instruction is input via the display unit; and determination means for determining a number N of the devices connected to the server that have been recognized by the recognizing means, and a number M of image forming devices already set as output destinations by the holding means and the new image forming device, when the specified image forming device is set as an output destination by the setting means. In an event that the determination means judges M to be less than N, setting of the specified image forming device as the output destination is permitted, and the number of image forming devices set as output destinations held by the holding means is updated, and, in an event that the determination means judges N and M to be equal, setting of the specified image forming device as the output destination is not permitted.

In contrast, Conte discloses floating license assignments for users which are applicable to device operation. (See Conte, column 26, lines 38 to 44.) However, Conte fails to disclose recognizing a presence of devices connected to a server, and a number thereof connected in response to obtaining instruction to add new image forming devices as output destinations, wherein the instruction is input via the display unit. In addition, Conte fails to disclose determining a number N of devices connected to the server that have been recognized by the recognizing means, and a number M of image forming devices already set as output destinations

by the holding means and the new image forming device, when a specified image forming device is set as an output destination by a setting means. In an event that the determination means judges M to be less than N, setting of the specified image forming device as the output destination is permitted, and the number of image forming devices set as output destinations held by the holding means is updated, and, in an event that the determination means judges N and M to be equal, setting of the specified image forming device as the output destination is not permitted.

Furthermore, Minari merely discloses a conventional server based printer system without a licensing technique. Therefore, Minari cannot supply that which is missing from Conte, namely recognizing licensing devices coupled to a network and then determining the number of allowable image forming devices in the event an obtaining instruction is received requesting to add new image forming devices as output destinations.

In light of the deficiencies of Minari and Conte as discussed above, Applicant submits that amended independent Claim 1 is now in condition for allowance and respectfully requests same.

Claims 21, 25 and 26 are directed to a server apparatus, a method, and a computer-readable medium substantially in accordance with the system of Claim 1. Accordingly, Applicant submits that Claims 21, 25 and 26 are also now in condition for allowance and respectfully requests same.

Claim 3 is directed to an image forming system including a server and client computers connected to a network, one or a plurality of image forming devices connected to either the network or the server, and devices of which one or a plurality can be connected to the server and which can be recognized by the server. The system comprises: input means for

inputting to said the server a job to be printed by an image forming device; rendering means for rendering the job inputted by said input means into an image; output means for outputting an image rendered by said rendering means to an image forming device specified by the job; setting means for setting the specified image forming device as an output destination at the server; output destination information holding means for holding a number of image forming devices set as output destinations by said setting means; and recognizing means for recognizing a presence of devices connected to the server and a number thereof connected, wherein the server periodically recognizes the number of devices connected to the server using said recognizing means, and determines a number n of recognized devices with a number m of image forming devices set as output destinations held in said output destination information holding means, and, in an event that n is judged to be less than m , a number of image forming devices for distributing and outputting jobs is restricted to at most the number n of recognized devices by recognizing means, or no jobs are output.

Amended Claim 3 features determining a number of allowable image forming devices by recognizing a presence of devices connected to the server and a number thereof connected as featured in Claim 1. In Claim 3, however, the server periodically recognizes the number of devices connected to the server rather than in response to an to obtaining instruction.

Applicant submits that the discussion from above in regard to Claim 1 applies as well to Claim 3. Accordingly, Applicant submits that amended independent Claim 3 is now in condition for allowance and respectfully requests same.

Claims 27 and 28 are directed to a method and a computer-readable medium, respectively, substantially in accordance with the system of Claim 3. Accordingly, Applicant submits that Claims 27 and 28 are also in condition for allowance and respectfully requests same.

Amended Claim 5 is directed to an image processing device for outputting image data to a plurality of image forming devices. The image processing device comprises: input means for inputting an image forming job, wherein one of the plurality of image forming devices is specified as an output destination; image processing means for generating image data for the specified image forming device based on the image forming job; image output means for outputting image data generated by said image processing means to the specified image forming device; connecting means for connecting to one or a plurality of devices; and control means for restricting a number of image forming devices capable of receiving image data outputted from said image output means, of the plurality of image forming devices, based on a number of devices connected to said connecting means, wherein, in an event that the number of devices connected to said connecting means is less than a number of the plurality of image forming devices, said control means selects a number of image forming devices corresponding to a difference in these numbers, and forbids image data outputted from said image output means from transmitting to the selected image forming devices.

Amended Claim 5 features restricting a number of image forming devices capable of receiving image data outputted from an image output means, of a plurality of image forming devices, based on a number of devices connected to a connecting means as featured in Claim 1. Accordingly, Applicant submits that the discussion from above in regard to Claim 1 applies as well to Claim 5. Therefore, Applicant submits that amended independent Claim 5 is now in condition for allowance and respectfully requests same.

Amended Claims 12 and 19 are directed to a method and a computer-readable medium, respectively, substantially in accordance with the system of Claim 5. Accordingly,

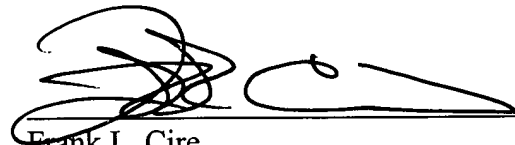
Applicant submits that Claims 12 and 19 are also in condition for allowance and respectfully requests same.

The other claims in this application are each dependent from one of the independent claims discussed above and are therefore believed allowable for at least the same reasons. Since each dependent claim is also deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual reconsideration of the allowability of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully requests favorable reconsideration and early passage to issue of the present application.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa, CA office at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frank L. Cire', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

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